

Selfish

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Selfish

by [ChloeWeird \(ChloeBYoung\)](#)

Summary

Loki was pregnant throughout all of the first Avengers movie, but hid it very well. Now, his time is up.

A new problem quickly became apparent. Without his magic, and the illusion he'd been conjuring for the many months he'd been a prisoner of the Chitauri and their master, the mound of his belly was visible to all who passed by. He couldn't hide anymore.

Notes

Canon Divergence: This picks up right after Loki gets thrown off the air scooter thing by Clint's exploding arrow, and diverges immediately. Also, I think messed with the timing of how long Loki was missing and the time between Thor and The Avengers.

IMPORTANT: Notes in the bottom for anyone who's particularly interested in the Thorki tag, which contain spoilers. Short version: abandon hope all ye who enter here.

ETA: I have an art!!! Profilore over on DeviantArt drew [this lovely sketch](#) for this fic. Give it some love!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Amid the sparkling shards of glass on the jutting terrace of Stark Tower, Loki laid, feeling the last of his store of magic fizzle away like a drop of water consumed by a spreading fire. The buffer of seidr that had shielded his midsection when he'd landed collapsed under the pressure of his knees and shoulders curling in against the pain.

His back, unprotected as he'd skidded to a halt on the rough stone, stung with every shallow, hitching breath from the smattering of small cuts the glass had made, even through the thick leather of his clothes, still foolishly, sentimentally gold and mawkish green. He ignored the many tiny wounds, though their number congealed to turn his spine into one burning plane, and rolled onto his back, testing each limb for injury after his fall from the Chitauri flying machine. Everything seemed intact, but a new problem quickly became apparent.

Without his magic, and the illusion he'd been conjuring for the many months he'd been a prisoner of the Chitauri and their master, the mound of his belly was visible to all who passed by. He couldn't hide anymore.

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Heat. That was what Loki woke to, weeks after he let go of his false father's spear and watched the remains of the Bifrost shrink into a pinprick that stung his eyes long after it had disappeared from view. His skin, shifted as it was to the white-lined blue of his Jötunn birth, bubbled and cracked at the application of white hot metal to his strapped-down forearm.

Hive-minded and slow though they may be, the Chitauri were not completely without strategy, and their plan to fight frost with fire was an effective one. Pain, he could withstand. His years fighting at Thor's side had taught him how to push beyond the sting of a blade or the breath-stealing crash of a heavy blow. But heat, from a searing localized brand or in an unceasing wash of thick, boiling air, shattered his defenses and ripped unwilling screams from his flesh.

After each session, before they tossed him back into his makeshift cell, they would ask him to join them, to help them to control the tesseract and gain all the riches Midgard had to offer. He wasn't always sure what kept him from accepting. Some nights it was the vision of Odin's disappointed face; Others, he almost gave in for the same reason.

Time was relative in the void. What had felt like centuries of falling, anchorless, awaiting death by starvation, thirst or the simple lack of the will to keep pushing the raw, icy not-air of space in and out of his lungs, was, in reality, no more than a month or two. He could never be sure.

In contrast, the Chitauri's legion of warriors conducted themselves and all their business according to a strict and systematic moon cycle that remained mostly incomprehensible to Loki in its subtleties, but also allowed him to measure the approximate number of "days" that he was held, with primitive scratches in the bricks of his cell, made with rocks wielded by shaking fingers still blistered with each day's tortures.

It was shortly after he'd made the 62nd mark that he first felt it; a tiny, almost imperceptible niggling presence in the depths of his consciousness, fighting its way through the haze of pain and exhaustion to scratch and irritate. The faint, yet undeniable something plucked at his depleted stores of magic, growing stronger each day, until it woke him up one night after his captors were finished, with a cool, soothing pulse, centered in his lower abdomen.

In the darkness of his cramped, fetid cage, a memory leaped, unbidden, from the part of Loki's mind that he'd shut away when he'd allowed his fingers to slip from their anchor on the bridge so many weeks ago. Frigga, describing to him and Thor while they clung to her skirts how every mother knows when a seed has taken root in her womb. Her hands had stroked their heads while she talked of the radiating certainty that pulsed through the veins from the place where the spark of conception had caught flame.

On the damp, hard floor of his cell, still curled on his side from the twisting, shooting pains of his various wounds, Loki smoothed a hand over the still flat stretch of his belly, and knew what his

next answer to his captors would be.

He couldn't stay where he'd landed, he knew. All around the tower, the sounds of weapons firing and buildings crumbling rise and set his heart pounding. Weak hands scrabbling at the slippery concrete, he pulled himself up to a low crawl and started his slow journey to slightly safer point inside. There was no safety for him until this was over, but at the very least, Stark's home would provide some cover.

His waters broke with a sharp pinging and Loki had to stop for long, anxious moments to catch his breath. His clothes were soon soaked through and he left an unfortunate trail of blood-streaked clear liquid across the sleek marble all the way to where he pulled himself up to sit back against Stark's bar. The chilly glass of the humming refrigerator against the back of his neck sent a shiver down his overheated body.

He let his body go lax with relief, though the narrow nook behind the long, high counter provided poor shelter. Anyone who came looking for him would only have to follow the sound of his harsh, sobbing breath.

Stuttgart had been a convincing show, he thought, for the always-watching emissary. Allowing himself to be captured had been humiliating, but necessary for the Chitauri's master plan to come to fruition. The plan was heavy-handed and drawn-out, but it would be effective nonetheless.

During the ride to Shield's base, Loki was distracted. The thick straps keeping him in his seat wouldn't have been tight, if he'd actually been the size that they thought he was, but the mound of his belly, on the small side as it was, was still prominent enough to strain against the metal and fabric. The buckle dug into the skin below his navel, and the baby twitched in displeasure. In tandem, the vibrations of the child and the jet jostled his insides and his stomach rebelled, filling his mouth with fresh, hot saliva.

When Thor burst through the door and grabbed him by the neck, Loki had but a moment to appreciate the freedom from the chafing straps, then they were hurtling through the air. Loki expended far too much magic to ensure a soft landing for himself, and battled through the sudden, dizzying fatigue to verbally spar with Thor. How quaint, he mused, that Thor would wax poetic about their brotherhood when Loki was in this state.

After Thor took a hard blow from the annoying metal warrior, Loki jackknifed from the sudden, rending pain from his abdomen that took his breath away just before it disappeared almost entirely. Anger, Loki thought, as Thor was briefly felled and the spasming spiked again with a flash of hot red through the core of his magic. The child knew its father.

With fingers stiff from clenching, he unlaced the front of his breeches, and pushed them to his knees. Though the bunched fabric restricted his movement, he was vulnerable enough; He couldn't force himself to leave his entire lower half bare while the battle was waged so close.

The contractions had been coming quicker for the past half hour. Too quick, Loki knew, for a normal birth. The magic that had suppressed the fetus' growth was gone, but the aftereffect was accelerated labour. He barely had time to catch his breath before the next wave of agonizing pressure hit him.

He reached down, brushing his fingertips along the edge of the opening he'd made for himself when his magic had been at it's strongest, aided by the scepter and desperation for the blameless child to reach the world safely, and stay in it. It was hot to the touch, sticky and quivering, and Loki couldn't hold back a moan when he probed deeper and felt the swiftly crowning head.

The next contraction was massive, and he gripped the marble counter above him as he screamed, past the point of caring if it brought anyone running. He felt like he was dying, felt torn in two. His body bowed and his throat clenched around calls to his mother. He bit his hand instead, drawing blood and making him gag. He would not call her.

He was almost free. Soon, Midgard would be nothing but heated rock and a smattering of war torn survivors. It would stink of Chitauri, soot and the blood and sweat of those who had died defending it, and it just might be all Loki's. Some legacy. But, if there was another safe place in the entirety of the nine realms or further where he could be reasonably sure he would be left alone, he would go there.

It was a poor offering for his firstborn. If it were possible, he would have offered the throne of a realm as majestic and golden as the one he'd been raised to believe could have been his. He placed his hand on the rippling skin of his belly as the contraction finished. He distracted himself through the next, and the next, with visions of how he would raise Midgard from the ashes to make it fit for them both.

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Inside of the glass cage, it was hot. Not blood-boiling, like the box he'd first inhabited with the Chitauri, but stifling and still enough that his concentration was impaired. Perhaps, if he had been centred and calm, he wouldn't have flinched so hard when he felt the baby spasm again.

He immediately went still again, not daring to look to see if the camera trained on him had twisted or focused. He exhaled a slow breath, closing his eyes and reaching out with his magic to soothe and stroke with tendrils of seidr. The anger was back, and with it, a gnashing frustration that Loki could feel emanating from the centre of his power and itching on the underside of his skin.

Wait, child, please, he pleaded with the baby. We have not time for this. He received only a stronger push in response, and he was suddenly chilled in the warm room, the beads of sweat on his forehead icy with panic.

He hadn't prepared for what might happen if the child decided that the time had come. He had meticulously chased down in his mind every possible way he might escape in the chaos of the aftermath, or demand his due when the victors were doling out spoils. He could not afford to break from these plans, but he had the sinking feeling he might have to.

His magic was running out. Without the sceptre to draw from, even the tiny expenditure of magic used to disguise his middle with tightly-fitted leather was becoming taxing in a way it hadn't over the months that his belly had been growing. His glamour was convincing, but he could feel the bone deep ache of wounds not allowed to fully heal for long, long months.

He recalled the first time he'd felt the child shift to ease his panic. He'd been on his knees, enduring one of the long speeches the Other gave about the consequences he would face, should he fail. He had been pregnant for over a year, when counted by the calendar of Asgard, though he would estimate that his growth would resemble a woman's at 7 months into her term.

Then, as now, he'd had to hold his tongue, keep perfectly still while the wonder at the tiny spark of life coursed through him, prickling his eyes and tightening his throat. The brutal, bloody words of

the Other washed over his ears but did not penetrate the haze of heady love for the little body nestled deep, sleeping no longer.

He slowed his breathing, cycling rhythmically through inhale and exhale. The angry spasms continued, tugging at his spine and sending bolts of fear to his heart. It was almost impossible for him to leave his hands where they were, gripping the edge of the bench, instead of cradling the swell that was visible only to him.

The baby would come, and soon. Not yet, not yet, not yet, he chanted.

With a final push, the baby slipped out into the tangle of fabric around his legs. Loki's choked off scream echoed in the empty room, then was replaced by a smaller, sharper cry of scandalized irritation. His child's first sound rose up loud and healthy and his eyes stung with relief.

Carefully, he lifted the slippery, wiggling body to his chest, forcing the last static fizzles of his magic out to sever the cord. He ran his fingers over her skin, feeling no imperfections or symptoms of her extended imprisonment. Her face was red, monstrous in the way that newborns' faces usually were. His tears spilled over and one landed on her tiny, perfect hand when he saw that the skin underneath the muck of her birth was grey and pink, without a trace of icy blue.

Cradling the child to his barely swollen breast, he freed his nipple and allowed her to latch on. He hadn't been sure that his body would produce anything, but as he tugged a strip of leather coat to his chest and swaddled the baby in it as best he could, he felt the quickening of his milk.

The wind whipped past the broken window through which he'd tossed Stark, but he paid it no mind. He listened to the sound of his daughter suckling and breathed through the last spasms to deliver the afterbirth, then darkness consumed him.

Loki could see the movement and chaos of the city from the corner of his eye while Stark drawled his smug speech about their team of heroes. The people would be running for their lives soon, and he felt a twinge in his gut that, for a moment, he thought might have been guilt. When it abated, then twisted again, he realized that, no, it was only the child pushing against the walls of its prison, like an enraged animal in a cage.

Thor would have made a different choice, he knew. Thor would have wept, agonized, then ultimately chosen to save the population of the earth by never giving in to his torturers, no matter how innocent the life in his belly. Loki had been selfish since he was child, a trait his mother had always hoped he'd grow out of. The lives of these many Midgardians, when set on a scale against the life of his unborn child, failed to have enough weight to tip in their favour.

Resisting would have been for naught, he reasoned. The Chitauri would have come to Midgard with or without him. He was a tool to be wielded by their master, easily replaceable. Another being would surely have given in, after less pain than he had withstood, and with less reason.

He'd repeated this to himself often, while languishing in the Chitauri's world. By now, he almost believed it.

Loki traded barbs with Stark on automatic, only jarred from his stupor by the failure of the sceptre to bend Stark to his will. The problem was easily fixed by sending him through a window, but soon there was a different, more pressing one.

The fight with Thor was clumsy, his blows lacking the speed or finesse he usually employed to turn Thor's strength against him. "Look around you," Thor demanded. "Do you think this madness will end with your rule?"

These Avengers were courageous, but the Chitauri were strong, and they would win. Once they were victorious, and only then, could Loki act of his own agency. Likely, they would leave him a realm that was razed to the ground with their glory in war, but Loki did not need a kingdom as splendoured as Asgard. All he needed was safety.

At the force of Thor's throw, Loki's shields flickered, but held. Soon, he thought to the angry stab of impatience in his belly, and rolled off the building to join the fray.

When next he opened his eyes, the city outside was eerily silent. Nestled on his chest, his daughter smacked her tiny lips and slept on, no longer impatient now that she'd made her inopportune entrance. Straining his ears for the sound of the battle, he used a corner of the soft green fabric of his undershirt to ineffectively wipe away the fluid that was slowly drying on her skin. When she was as clean as he could make her, he draped the shirt over his upper body, covering her completely. Moving slowly, so as not to jostle her, or aggravate his wounds, he pulled his pants back up his thighs, wincing at the wet, cold fabric, sticky on his skin.

She snuffled, coughed and settled against him, exhausted from her few moments of wakefulness. Loki stared down at her, at the sliver of tight black curls he could see peeking out from under the shirt. Gingerly, he ran his long fingers down her back, along her fragile spine. Every part of her was fragile, really. She was completely dependant on him. It was heady, and thrilling and...utterly terrifying.

Unbidden, the bleak, frozen wasteland of Jotunheim sprang to his mind, along with the crumbling remains of their buildings and temples. He tried to imagine placing her on a chilly slab, alone and unprotected from elements or enemy. His breath caught and his chest ached from the thought.

"I will never leave you, child," he whispered into the soft divot at the back of her skull.

Odd, he thought, as the faint sounds of the city floated in through the window. Instead of the sickening grunts and snorts of the Chitauri, and the whirr of their flying machines, he could make out the sounds of human voices and distant sirens.

By the Norns, he thought. He huffed a disbelieving laugh, then winced at the tenderness in his abdomen. *They've done it.*

"I wouldn't try to move, if I were you."

Loki froze, like a prey animal scenting the air and feeling the eyes of the wolf upon them. He looked up slowly and saw Banner at the opening of his claimed shelter. Banner had no weapon in his hands, but the shredded trousers he wore were enough of a reminder that he had no need of bullets.

"I will not," Loki assured him, his throat dry and clicking from panic. He took a steadying breath, hyper-aware of the limp weight on his chest. "Banner. I beg of you. Jail me, chain me up, I care not. I am finished. But please, do not--"

"I should." Banner's voice was soft, his eyes hard and cold as granite. "A certain kind of man might make use of the gifts he's been given. Obliterate you now, and send our condolences back to

Asgard.” Loki swallowed, his eyes locked on the rhythmic clench and release of Banner’s fists. He opened his mouth to plead again, his soul(what was left of it) shrivelling at the thought of laying his head on a stone for anyone, but Banner interrupted him. “I’m not that kind of man. So, don’t worry, Loki. I’ll leave you for the Captain.”

Loki didn’t relax, but he breathed easier at the mention of the “American hero” he’d heard so much about. There would be no infanticide on Steven Rogers’ watch. Carefully, Loki shifted, testing out his body’s ability to sit up. He hissed at the dull ache emanating from his lower half, but pushed past it, holding his daughter against his chest and inching upward.

Banner watched him for long moments, his scrutiny prickling on Loki’s skin, but, eventually he sighed and took a few cautious steps closer. The healer in him would not be suppressed, Loki supposed. Even for a fellow monster.

“What are you doing here, Loki? Shouldn’t you have been out in the fray, instead of hiding here in the enemy’s territory?”

Loki let out a harsh breath that could have been a laugh, in another life. What territory was friendly, when every realm you’d ever set foot on was your enemy? He didn’t answer, but continued to lever himself upward. Without the use of his hands, his back scraped against the cooler he was leaning against, lighting up the sea of glass splinters like a wall of fire. He flinched, though that made it worse, then cursed when Banner’s eyes sharpened and he went to his knee a short distance from Loki.

“Are you injured? Do you need a medic?”

His question was cut off by a quiet, but unmistakable cry, as Loki’s daughter woke and waved her arm against the covering he’d pulled over her. He made a low shushing noise and soothed her with a gentle hand on her back, but the damage was done. Banner stood, murmuring “oh, dear god,” his eyes widening. Loki could see the turning gears in them, as emotions flickered across his face and Loki interpreted them as best he could. Should he help the evil mastermind, who was obviously incapacitated, Loki guessed was the first question. Then, perhaps, whether or not Loki had stolen the child, as part of some sort of incomprehensible plot. But, no, that line of questioning wouldn’t last long. Banner could see the dark stains on Loki’s lower half, the red smears on the marble floor and his haggard appearance.

Banner unclipped a radio from his waistband and stared at Loki, shell shocked, as he spoke into it. “Guys? I need you at the top of the tower. We have a sticky situation here.”

The baby cried again as they waited in silence, Loki stroking her cheek and Banner running his hands through his greying hair. She’d quieted by the time Loki heard the heavy clanking footsteps of Stark’s iron suit enter, on the other side of the counter, where Loki couldn’t see.

“B-Man, what’s shakin’?” Stark asked, and Loki heard the long-suffering sigh of the Widow.

“I found our missing megalomaniac.”

In an instant, the cocking of weapons was the only sound in the room.

“Where is he? I want the first shot.” Barton, bloodthirsty, as always.

“Just hold on a minute. This is about to get more complicated than we were expecting.” Banner had his back to Loki, his hands raised in a placating gesture. His body blocked Loki from their sight, but Loki could hear the clock ticking toward the expiration of his small haven. “Thor. Were you

aware that your brother was pregnant?"

The silence was so perfectly taut that Loki would have grinned and thrown out a rejoinder, if he hadn't been so tired.

Thor's voice was careful, calming. "Banner, you make little sense."

"Did I stutter? Did you know. That your brother. Was going to have a *baby*."

The group exploded with questions at Banner's quiet pronouncement.

"Bruce. Buddy. Could you back up for a second?"

"You're fucking with us, right?"

"'Was going to.' What does that mean?"

"Banner, if this is some kind of jest--"

"Did you win?" Loki called, over the wall. "Are the chitauri all dead? And the portal, did you close it?"

Barton leapt on top of the marble counter into a crouch the moment he located where the voice was coming from, and pointed his arrow down at him, the string vibrating with a similar tension as Loki's fingers, clenched in the material covering his daughter.

"Yeah. We did. It's closed up tight, and the Tesseract is being taken care of by Shield as we speak. Your buddies are dead, Loki. You're beaten."

Loki nodded, let his eyes slip shut for a moment, then nodded. "You're right. I suppose you'd better lock me up, then."

Barton narrowed his sharp eyes, returned, now, to their natural colour, and sparking with frustrated anger. His fingers shifted on his weapon and he widened his stance. He was ready. Loki just had to give him a reason to send a sharpened arrow singing across the short distance between the bow and his eye.

Loki remembered how, so short a time ago, those eyes had looked on him with such concern when he'd clutched the flat illusion of his belly in reaction to a swift kick from under the skin. There had been such warmth in them, such sincerity as Barton grasped his elbow to steady him. They were as cold as ice, now. Remorseless in his thirst for Loki's blood.

Bruce stepped forward, not quite coming in between the archer and the villain, but close enough that it gave Barton pause. "Clint. No one is shooting anyone until we get this mess sorted out. Especially not when there's a baby in the crosshairs."

"Wait. You were serious?"

"As a funeral. Or, I suppose, given the situation, a baby shower."

"Come on!" Stark groaned. "You choose *now* to develop an appreciation of puns?"

"Oh, my *god*, what is that?"

Rogers had, unnoticed, made his way to the mouth of Loki's shelter. His eyes were glued to Loki's chest, where the baby's covering had slipped off the top of her head and her tiny fist had grasped a

metal buckle hanging from the remains of his armour.

“Told you,” Banner muttered as the rest of the group gathered around to see. Loki locked his muscles against the urge to crawl backward and twist into a protective ball around her tiny, defenseless body. There was nowhere for him to go, and, intellectually, he knew that she was safest where they could see her, though his protective instincts were strong.

“This is a trick,” Clint spat, though he raised his bow a few scant inches, so that he would hit the middle of Loki’s forehead, should he loose an arrow. “He’s toying with all of us, trying to gain sympathy.”

“As much as I hate to think that my brother could sink to such a base scheme, Barton may be correct.” Thor spoke, dazedly, not meeting Loki’s eye, simply staring, wide-eyed at the small lump of tired newborn atop his chest.

Loki smiled, a fierce baring of surprisingly sharp teeth. “How suspicious you are, now, Thor. I never thought I’d see the day. I must admit I’m proud to have finally instilled that instinct in you, after all these years.”

Thor’s jaw tightened, but he didn’t take Loki’s bait.

“But, wait, hang on,” Tony spoke up. “He’s a man. I’m not imagining that.”

“Not technically. The Jotunn have but one gender.”

“Fair enough. but there was definitely not a baby-sized growth on him all this time.”

“Loki’s magic is powerful enough that he could hide it with a glamour.”

The Black Widow broke her silence. “Is he powerful enough to create an illusion of a baby, then?”

“It is possible,” Thor admitted. “There is a simple way to find out. Magical copies or illusions of that nature can not be made solid. A hand would pass through it if touched.”

Silence fell over the group as they all swivelled their heads toward Loki. It was difficult for him to keep an impassive face, when he was smirking inwardly at the trepidation of his adversaries, even with the evidence of Loki’s weakness written in the blood from his injuries and the slump of his body on the floor.

Loki sighed, feigning boredom while his pulse spiked at the thought of their battle-stained hands on her unsullied skin. “If you must.”

Loki expected Thor to volunteer, but he merely gripped Mjolnir’s handle harder and refused to meet the expectant eyes of his comrades. Banner stepped forward after a time and kneeled next to Loki. When he reached for the flap of torn fabric offering her poor protection, Loki grasped his wrist and hissed, “I swear to whatever gods you believe in, Banner, if you hurt--”

“I know.” Banner flexed his wrist in Loki’s grip, but stilled his hand. “No need for threats. There’s no criminal bad enough in this world that I would take it out on their kid.”

When his fist began to shake from the momentary show of strength, Loki let go and nodded his permission. Banner didn’t waste time, and put a gentle hand over the span of her back right away. Next, he put the back of his hand under her nose, then against her forehead. With a blunt finger, he nudged her tight fist until it latched on, squeezing tight enough to turn the tip a blotchy red and white.

“Do you need treatment?” Banner asked, softly, while he performed his cursory examination.

“I am fine.”

“You don’t look--”

“I am. Fine,” Loki snapped, then closed his eyes against the wave of dizziness that followed. “Or I will be, given time.”

Bruce nodded, then got to his feet. “It’s no illusion. The baby’s real as I am. Also, pretty sure it was born in the last half hour or so.”

Thor grimaced, and his head twitched, angrily toward Rogers. “Captain, what step would you have us take next?”

“I...” The Captain ran a hand over his hair, greasy and unkempt from the battle. Thor, too, was far from his blond, gleaming perfection. “There’s no protocol for this.”

Stark scoffed, “What, you mean Shield doesn’t have a chapter in their training manual for what to do when your favourite supervillain’s acquired a mini-me?”

Banner spoke up, facing the group at large, unmindful of Loki at his marginally unprotected back. “Maybe not, but they’ve got to have rules for children of prisoners of war. And I very much doubt they include standing around looking confused at the concept of an agendered alien species.”

Rogers shook himself, then nodded. “Someone call headquarters. Arrange for transport.”

“I’m on it,” Romanov answered and stepped away into the large room.

Loki’s daughter made a whimpering complaint, then opened her tiny, plump lips to cry gustily. Loki panicked for a full minute before he realized what she needed and he guided her mouth to his nipple again. She quieted instantly, her wails turning to quiet grunts as she took what was offered.

“Jesus,” Stark breathed, his armour clanking as he leaned in to sate his horrified fascination. “Are you...?”

“She is hungry,” Loki gritted out. “Would you deny her food to ease your own discomfort?”

Thor’s breath left him in a harsh rush. “She...It’s a girl?”

“Yes.”

Thor’s lips trembled into a small smile for what was probably the first time Loki had seen since they’d been in Asgard together, but he sobered quickly. “Brother. How did this happen? Did the chitauri--”

Loki scoffed, the echo of that tiny smile still smarting with the burn of old, useless memories. “Wouldn’t you like that? Wouldn’t you all? Alien spawn to put down before it’s old enough to think, a brainless, emotionless insect, barely out of its shell, to crush under your foot without a drop of remorse. No, Thor, those animals didn’t put their babe in me.”

“Then how? Who?”

Loki ran an absent finger through the tight, swirls of black on his daughter’s head. “You used to laugh, Thor. You and your friends, when I left you to your play fighting to practice magic. I hope you haven’t forgotten, all those years ago, when you scorned my seidr, all but when it was useful

to you. I used to keep your dinner warm, do you remember?” His grin felt dry and cracked on his own face. He turned it toward Thor, prepared to treasure the following moments the next time things looked grim for him. “Stasis spells have come in quite handy in recent years. I learned a trick that can slow the growth of living things. I’ve been with child for a very long time, Brother Dear. I estimate 14 months.”

During their conversation, the Avengers had watched them like a ball game. Collectively, they waited for Thor to count back the months, and Rogers grabbed his arm when he went pale.

“That night. Before the coronation,” Thor whispered. “I thought it was a dream.”

“I can’t say I’m surprised.” Loki aimed his words like a dagger, then softened when Thor flinched. “We were both more drunk than we’d been in centuries.”

Stark’s manic giggle rent the silence, but was soon covered up by the sound of booted feet running into the room. Guns were soon pointed at him from all angles, but Banner held out his hands to stay the Shield operatives.

“We need medical transport,” he ordered. “And if a hair on that kid’s head gets hurt, you’re gonna see me get very angry.”

Loki accepted the blanket shoved at him by a medical professional who was shaking with fear, and smiled as he tucked it around his daughter’s sleeping face. As rough hands strapped his shoulders and ankles to a stiff board, leaving his forearms free to cradle her, he allowed his eyes to fall shut. He wouldn’t fall asleep, but he could take a moment to rest before the journey toward his incarceration. No harm would come to her. Not while Banner kept watch. It appeared he agreed with Loki on one thing.

Even children of monsters were precious.

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“It’s freaky how good he is with her.”

Thor hummed noncommittally, not taking his eyes off the screen showing Loki in his cell to acknowledge Stark. Inside the glass-walled room, Loki sat on a stool in front of the unadorned bassinet. They were playing, he’d realized when he’d taken up watch earlier that afternoon. Loki moved his long fingers through the air in swirling patterns in front of the baby’s still colour-changing eyes, inducing soft, cooing noises and jerking kicks.

Thor’s hands clenched at the sight of that little wrinkled foot. His fists would dwarf it, even his finger would. The babe had been pronounced healthy and fully formed by the physician who had examined it, though on the small side. Thor was surprised. He would have thought that any progeny of his would be hale and strapping from birth. He supposed that many things about his first child were surprising.

“Cute little thing, isn’t she?” Stark mused.

“Yes.”

“I bet you’re just bursting with the proud Papa feelings.” Tony leaned against the doorway and stroked his groomed beard. “Or is it proud Uncle?”

Thor bristled, even as his stomach churned. “Stark, hold your--”

“Tony. Enough.”

Bruce filled the entryway behind Stark, his arms crossed and his face drawn in censure. Stark laughed and waved his hand, but disappeared back down the hall from whence he came. When he was gone, Bruce came to stand next to Thor, gazing thoughtfully at the pair on the screen.

“How are you doing?” he asked, quietly.

Thor thought on the question long and hard. He’d found his brother, thought to be dead, but he was taken by madness. He’d started to make fast friendships with his comrades, but most were derailed by their discomfort with his family. He’d been given a child, but by his *brother*, and the babe had screamed and sent a bolt of hot lighting up his outstretched arms when he’d tried to hold her. They still ached from that show of displeasure.

Give her time, Loki had said, cradling the child and soothing her wails. *She’s known no one but me for 14 months*. Until then, there would be no separating the two.

“I am,” he said, at length, “doing.”

Bruce chuckled wryly, then sobered. “What are you going to do now? There’s no way Fury’s going to let you two fade away back to your world, not without a guarantee that Loki will be incarcerated.”

Thor shook his head. “He acted in defense of his unborn child. The law is hazy in Asgard about this type of situation. It is likely that temporary house arrest will be sufficient punishment in the eyes of our judiciary.”

“What do you think he plans to do?” he nodded toward the screen, at Loki’s soft smile and dancing hands.

Thor laughed mirthlessly. “Oh, Loki has grand ambitions for her.” At Bruce’s confused frown, he explained, “Her name. It means ‘glorious victory.’”

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Loki slid his hands under Sigrid’s neck and back and tucked her into his chest. His fussy girl liked to be walked around until she slept, and wouldn’t settle for anything less. She was drowsy from their game, so she dropped off into slumber within a few minutes of pacing around the cell. Loki’s arms were tired too, so he settled her in her bed as soon as she was unconscious. It was taxing, performing the hand motions for basic spellwork for hours every day. However, Loki was sure that he could never start teaching her too soon.

She would be strong, he knew. Her magic was powerful, even now, at barely 6 pounds. Nurtured from birth, her control would be unparalleled.

Loki brushed a finger over the damp crest of her rosebud lip, the heart he thought frozen out of him swelling with love. She was precious in every way. She possessed the best parts of both her parents, and would surpass them both.

Fury could continue to make his vague threats about how Loki could make himself useful in this realm. Perhaps, one day, he would lend a hand to the Avengers against the next foe they faced. (Certainly, he would help anyone if they were going up against Thanos.) They would escape, some day. Disappear into the worlds between worlds, walk the edges and cracks between the realms

until they found one that suited them. Time was no issue. He would live in the fishbowl they'd given him until she deemed it too small. It mattered not to him.

For her, there was nothing he would not do. No world he would not conquer.

End Notes

RE: Thorki tag. They technically get it on, and Thor is the father of Loki's baby, but it was dub-con due to both of them being drunk, and they are still brothers in their minds.(Or, at the very least, Thor's mind.) They are both still very uncomfortable with this, and this isn't solved by the end of the fic. Somehow there ended up being more sexual tension between Bruce and Loki? Idk, it was an accident, but it's easily ignored if that's not your jam.

Hope you enjoyed! I'm not really writing for this fandom anymore, but this story has been languishing in my WIP folder for a year and a half, so I figured I'd better kick it out.

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